

CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT

IN CHARGE OF
LOUISE C. BRENT

MASSAGE IN THE TREATMENT OF INFANTILE PARALYSIS

By T. AMBROSE STANTON, M.D.

TORONTO, CANADA

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of massage in the treatment of those affections of children characterized by wasting of muscles. Especially in the treatment of infantile paralysis is it found to be a measure of great value, not only in preserving the integrity of the muscles, but also in preventing the subsequent deformities which present so many difficulties in treatment.

Infantile spinal paralysis, known technically as anterior poliomyelitis, occurs chiefly within the first three years of life. It is primarily an affection of the spinal cord, most commonly in the cervical or lumbar enlargements, wherein there is inflammation of the anterior horn of gray matter, leading to atrophy of that tract and disappearance of the large motor cells in the affected portion. In consequence there follows a paralysis of the groups of muscles over which these cells preside.

During the acute stage of the disease the treatment is largely directed to the control of the spinal inflammation, to lessen its intensity and limit its extent. But as a rule it is not until this stage is passed that the cases come under observation. If, then, all the motor cells pertaining to a particular group of muscles are destroyed, paralysis of that group must remain complete, but if some of the cells have maintained their integrity, those muscles may regain much of their power. In following a large number of cases it has been noted that careful and persistent treatment often results in partial or complete restoration of function, and that by all means the most valuable measure in attaining this result is massage of the affected muscles. As soon as the child can bear friction this treatment should be commenced.

In carrying out the movements the bare hand may be employed, but the use of cocoa-butter or cod-liver oil is desirable. The mildest

form is what is termed "friction massage;" in this method the part is rubbed in a circular manner with two or three fingers of one hand; following this, the part is grasped with the whole hand and firmly but gently squeezed in an upward direction; this movement is known as "effleurage," its object being to promote the circulation in the lymphatic and other vessels. Pétrissage, or kneading of the muscle, is a movement of much value as tending to promote capillary circulation and to stimulate nervous force. Tapotement, or tapping of the muscle, is also employed, these movements being followed by effleurage. At first massage should be very gentle, but as the child becomes more accustomed to it the more forcible measures may be employed.

What we hope to accomplish by these measures in the disease under consideration is the stimulation of the circulation and the maintenance of the nutrition of the limb, so that in the gradual improvement which frequently takes place in the spinal cord the patient may be under the most favorable conditions for the restoration of the use of the limb. If the nervous connection is entirely lost, then we have at least succeeded in preventing wasting and deformity. It is safe to say that the use of massage is worth more than all the other remedies advised in these cases, and should be practised for months, if necessary, in order to obtain the best results. With some instruction and practice the movements can be readily carried out by the nurse, and it is a cause for some regret that in some of the training-schools an art of so much practical importance should receive so little attention.

A GYMNASIUM has been started in connection with the Out-door Department of the Children's Hospital, Toronto. It is fully equipped for all kinds of corrective work. The benefit derived from this treatment by the in-door patients led the trustees to start these classes in hopes of benefiting a larger number of children.

THE boy who is always willing to be the animal when playing horse never wants for companions to play with. It is the boy, as it is the man, who lets others have the honors who comes out ahead in the race.